



CLEAN WATER ACTION

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Written Testimony of Sarah A. Uhl
On behalf of Clean Water Action
Before the Connecticut General Assembly Environment Committee
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Testimony in Support of:

HB 6496

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An Act Concerning Green Cleaning Products in Schools

Dear Senator Gaffey, Representative Fleischmann, and honorable members of the Education Committee,

Clean Water Action submits this testimony in support of Raised H.B. No. 6496, *An Act Concerning Green Cleaning Products in Schools*. The bill would require primary and secondary public schools in Connecticut to shift to using third-party-certified green cleaning products that are safer for human health and the environment. Cleaning products regulated by FIFRA (the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act) such as disinfectants, disinfecting cleansers, sanitizers and antimicrobials would specifically be excluded from this requirement.

Clean Water Action is a non-profit organization with one million members nationwide and over 24,000 members in Connecticut. Our Hartford-based staff works with local groups and citizen leaders around the state on issues affecting our health, environment, and quality of life. On behalf of our members, we thank the committee for raising a strong bill on the issue of safer, greener cleaning in Connecticut schools. We also thank the Connecticut Foundation for Environmentally Safe Schools, and endorse the small but important changes to the bill language that can be found attached to their testimony.

Cleaning products exemplify how United States' chemical laws have not kept up with the science on health impacts, particularly of low doses and chronic exposures. Currently, cleaning product manufacturers are not even required to disclose the ingredients they use, and we now know that ingredients in both residential and industrial cleaners can contribute to a wide range of chronic diseases and disorders, ranging from respiratory problems to cancers. Many cleaning products used on a daily basis in schools, daycare centers, health care facilities and other public buildings contain toxic chemicals linked to asthma, reduced fertility, cancers, and harm to the heart, lungs, kidneys and immune system. Children are especially at risk because their bodies are still growing. Cleaning workers are also at higher risk due to their frequent and prolonged exposure to cleaning chemicals. Toxic chemicals that damage our health cost us all in health care, lost work and productivity. Asthma alone in the United States costs approximately \$9.4 billion in direct health care each year. Children who are sick not only cause parents to lose income, but their ability to

learn and someday hold a job is harmed.

The good news is that safer, effective, and inexpensive alternatives are available, and have been successfully used in Connecticut as well as other states in a variety of settings, including schools. Green Seal and EcoLogo are third-party organizations that certify products based on how well they perform the desired cleaning function, and factors used to measure health and environmental impacts. Products with Green Seal or EcoLogo approval meet stringent standards for both efficacy and impacts on health and the environment.

Pursuant to Public Acts 07-100 and 08-186, the Connecticut Department of Administrative Services (DAS) has developed and posted on its website "Policy for use of Environmentally Preferable Cleaning and Sanitizing Products" for green cleaning products that must now be used in all state-owned facilities, including Vo-Tech schools. This DAS policy requires that only Green Seal and EcoLogo products be used in state-owned and leased facilities, provides access to contracts for janitorial and custodial product suppliers and gives steps or guidelines for the purchase and use of green cleaning products. This was an important step, and thanks to the purchasing infrastructure at DAS, we now have a golden opportunity to extend that law to require green cleaning in schools. Individual municipalities or groups of municipalities can already purchase green products through DAS, if they desire, for no administrative fee. In fact, the cost-savings of participating in the bulk purchasing through the state has been estimated on the DAS website as being 20-45% off catalogue prices or manufacturers suggested retail prices, which includes both cleaning products and equipment. Overall, in hundreds of case studies, switching to green cleaning has been shown to be cost neutral. In some cases, when best practices are used, switching to green cleaning has resulted in cost-savings. This scenario would be even more likely in Connecticut where schools could purchase through the state.

The guidelines and list of vendors for green cleaning products for use in schools are the same as those posted on the DAS website for municipal and state buildings. This is because the third party certification through green seal is the same for all settings, enabling streamline purchasing. DAS would also be required to post guidelines for best cleaning management practices (section 1(d)). These best practices could easily be adapted from existing guidelines in New York State, also attached to Connecticut Foundation for Environmentally Safe Schools testimony. All vendors of Green Seal certified products are required to provide free, on-site training (as part of the Green Seal certification requirements). Therefore, Connecticut schools and cleaning contractors will have access to this free training.

Please accept our sincere thanks for focusing on this timely issue.

Sincerely,

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